

HISTORIC RIVER STEAMER

Belle of Louisville: A Window to the Past, A Door to the Future

Thanks to

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Louisville Metro

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Dear Friends:

The *Belle of Louisville* is the oldest authentic Mississippi River-style steamboat operating in the world today, and we are proud to have this unique representative of our country's history right here in our community. More than two million passengers from all over the globe have enjoyed her historic charm since she became a permanent resident of Louisville in 1962, and she is a steadfast example of our famous southern hospitality.

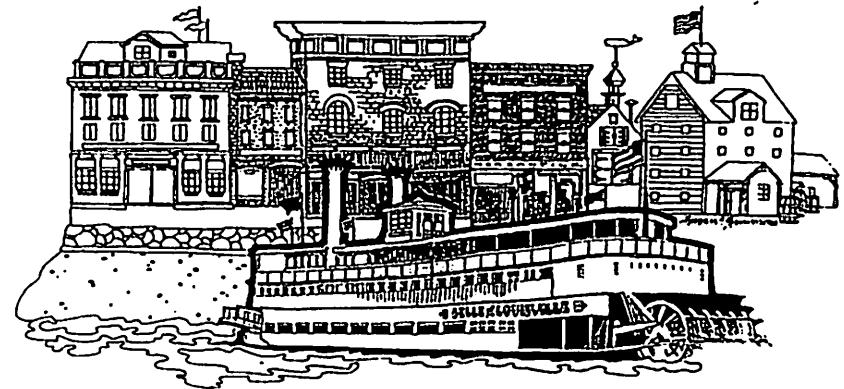
While she reminds us of a time long ago when steamboats were plentiful, today the *Belle* is part of the progressive renaissance of Louisville's waterfront – truly a window to the past and a door to the future – extending a rich and colorful river tradition into the 21st century.

Whether you're experiencing the *Belle of Louisville* for the first time or are a returning passenger, I know you will agree that the thrill of traveling by paddlewheeler is unsurpassed.

Sincerely,

Jerry E. Abramson

Mayor, Louisville Metro



A BRIEF HISTORY

The Beginning

Though we know her today as the "Belle of Louisville", she was originally named the "Idlewild" when she was built in 1914 at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for the West Memphis Packet Company.

Her owners had designed her to be a ferry and day packet vessel (for moving cargo), and she was well-suited for her later career as an excursion boat. After arriving in her first home port of Memphis, Tennessee, she operated primarily as a ferry boat between Memphis and West Memphis, Arkansas, while approach roads to a new bridge spanning the Mississippi River were constructed. The "Idlewild" did, however, pick up extra money

doing packet work whenever she was hired for it and when she could be freed from her service as a ferry.

Her Early Years

The "Idlewild" entered service at a time when river cargo handling and travel seemed to be in their prime; but she was to enjoy only a brief career as a day packet whose decks were laden with bales of cotton, barrels and crates of farm, household, and construction goods, lumber, and sacks of grain. She carried passengers as well, she was solid and well-built, and with a steel hull that required little water to keep afloat (she draws only 5' of water) was able to travel on virtually every navigable waterway.